

## THE NATURE OF OSIRIS

Osiris  
associate  
d  
with the  
pine, the  
sycamor  
e,  
the  
tamarisk  
,  
and the  
acacia.

In the hall of Osiris at Denderah the coffin containing the hawk-headed mummy of the god Is clearly depicted as enclosed within a tree, apparently a conifer, the trunk and branches of which are seen above and below the coffin.<sup>1</sup> The scene thus corresponds closely both to the myth and to the ceremony described by Firmicus Maternus. In another scene at Denderah a tree of the same sort Is represented growing between the dead and the reviving Osiris, as if on purpose to indicate that the tree was the symbol of the divine resurrection.<sup>2</sup> A pine-cone often appears on the monuments as an offering presented to Osiris, and a manuscript of the Louvre speaks of the cedar as sprung from him.<sup>3</sup> The sycamore and the tamarisk were also his trees. In inscriptions he is spoken of as residing in them;<sup>4</sup> and in tombs his mother Nut Is often portrayed standing in the midst of a sycamore-tree and pouring a libation for the benefit of the dead.<sup>5</sup> In one of the Pyramid Texts we read, "Hail to thee, Sycamore, which enclosest the god";<sup>6</sup> and in certain temples the statue of Osiris used to be placed for seven days upon branches of sycamores. The explanation appended in the sacred texts declares that the placing of the image on the tree was intended to recall the seven months passed by Osiris in the womb of his mother Nut, the goddess of the sycamore.<sup>7</sup> The rite recalls the story that Adonis was born after ten months' gestation from a myrrh-tree.<sup>8</sup> Further, in a sepulchre at How (Diospolis Pan/a) a tamarisk is depicted overshadowing the tomb of Osiris, while a bird Is perched among the

# bran with the significant legend " the soul of ches Osiris/'<sup>9</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> A. Marietta-Bey, Denderah, iv. pl. 66.
- <sup>2</sup> A. Marietta-Bey, Denderah<sup>^</sup> iv. pl. 72. Compare E. Lefebure, Le my the Qsirien, pp. 194, 196, who re-gards the tree as a conifer. But it is perhaps a tamarisk.
- <sup>3</sup> E. Lefebure, op. tit. pp. 195, 197.
- <sup>4</sup> S. Birch, in Sir J. G. Wilkinson's Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians (London, 1878), iii. 84.
- <sup>5</sup> Sir J. G. Wilkinson, op. cit. iii. 62-64 ; E. A. Wallis Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians) ii. 106 sq. j G.
- Maspero, Histoire andenne des Peuples de r Orient Classique,, i. 185.
- <sup>6</sup> J. H. Breasted, Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt (London, 1912), p. 28.
- <sup>7</sup> A. Moret, Kings and Gods of Egypt (New York and London, 1912), P- S3-
- <sup>8</sup> Above, vol. i. pp. 227 sq.
- <sup>9</sup> Sir J. G. Wilkinson, op. cit. iii. 349 sq. ; A. Errnan, Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum<sup>^</sup> p. 368 ; H. Brugsch, Religion und Mythologie der alten Aegypter, p. 621.